



Jonathan Russell, Pastor
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January 5, 2021

Church Family,

I wanted to provide you with an update and some important announcements that will impact our weekly schedule in the coming days.

Before that update, let me repeat an announcement I made Sunday morning. In 2020, we partnered with RIP Medical Debt, a non-profit organization that seeks to purchase medical debt that other groups, such as churches, can then help eliminate. Our partnership provided a high point in a year that had many low points. Because of your giving, we were able to eliminate EVERY PENNY of medical debt that was available for purchase in Santa Rosa County! Almost 500 Santa Rosa County residents benefited from your generosity and had their medical debt erased!

We were then able to extend that relief to counties beyond Santa Rosa. In total, your giving helped eliminate medical debt in TEN counties in our area, benefiting 840 individuals, and eliminating \$1.3 MILLION of medical debt! Wow!!! Thank you for giving!

Medical debt will continue to accumulate in our county, so our partnership with RIP Medical Debt is ongoing. If you would like to contribute to this effort, simply mark your gift "RIP Medical Debt." We have a designated fund in our financial office for this purpose, and we will continue to work with this organization to relieve medical debt in our county this year.

As you know, reported cases of COVID continue to spike in our area. As we move forward, please remember the most basic instructions that have been shared since the beginning of this pandemic. Obviously, if you have tested positive, please continue to remain home, but we hope you'll join us for worship online. Similarly, if you feel sick or have any symptoms, or if you have recently been exposed to someone with COVID, please choose to worship online instead of in person.

We certainly desire to see everyone in their pew, but we also want you to be safe and stay healthy. If being in a gathering of people will put your health at risk, please know that we understand your need to worship from home, but we have no plans to rent out your pew, and we look forward to the day when you can return to worship with us on campus.

Continue to pray for those in our church and community who have been impacted by this virus. I would encourage you to ask God to use science and the intelligence of doctors and medical researchers as vaccines continue to become available. Be sure you cover the frontline workers in prayer: pray for doctors, nurses, EMTs, LEOs, home health professionals, hospice care workers, teachers, etc., as they continue to help others.

As we move forward, we plan to continue providing a space for onsite worship each Sunday morning at 10:30. All along the way we have encouraged physical distancing while on campus, as well as the wearing of a face mask when physical distancing isn't likely or possible. We continue to offer those recommendations.

One area of concern that has resurfaced involves our Connection Groups. During our worship service we are able to space out in our sanctuary. However, many groups are unable to adequately space out during Connection Groups. Therefore, please note that **we have decided to delay resuming Connection Groups for at least the next two weeks**. Again, Connection Groups will not meet onsite for the next two weeks: January 10 and January 17. We will evaluate the situation for the final weeks of January at a later time.

Wednesday activities will continue as scheduled, beginning tomorrow, January 6, at 6:00 PM. Our crowd is generally much smaller on Wednesday evenings, and we are able to space out the groups that meet in the space we have available. If something changes regarding our Wednesday schedule, we will announce and advertise that change.

Again, for review...

- Connection Groups, which have not meet in person for the past two weeks, will NOT meet on January 10 and January 17. Decisions regarding January 24 and 31 will come later.
- Our Sunday worship service will continue to be available on campus and online (when Mediacom cooperates) at 10:30 AM.
- Wednesday activities / Bible study will resume on January 6 at 6:00 PM.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via email at jrussell@fbcmlton.org or call the church office at 850.623.3122. Know that I'm praying for you and your family, and I look forward to the day when COVID is in our rearview mirror. Continue to pray for each other and ask God for opportunities to be his hands and feet this week!

Sincerely,



Jonathan Russell